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Briefing Notes for
The National Security Council

THE IRANIAN SITUATION

The failure of the Iranian Parliament to meet during the past week again underscores Prime Minister Mossadeq's current political weakness. A report sponsored by the Prime Minister, aimed at further reducing the Shah's powers, has been before parliament for the last month. Mossadeq's supporters, however, have been unable to secure the necessary quorum to act on it.

Eight opposition deputies have left Tehran and thus have blocked all efforts to convene a quorum. Mossadeq reportedly asked the Shah to dismiss parliament, but the latter refused.

Mossadeq's extensive but disunited opposition is also in a weak position, mainly because of the Shah's unwillingness to take any initiative. General Zahedi and other leading political figures who have been plotting against Mossadeq have, according to late reports, postponed plans for a coup, awaiting a more propitious time. Mullah Kashani, president of parliament, a long-time critic of Mossadeq, has moved cautiously in the present situation. Opposition elements to Mossadeq in the army are apparently not well coordinated with his political opponents.

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SECURITY INFORMATION

Mossadeq controls the Army Chief of Staff and he has a large popular following which the Communist Tudeh party has temporarily joined. While he has not been able to secure parliament's cooperation in recent days, Mossadeq has a compact bloc of parliamentary votes, which can, in turn, prevent effective action against him by his parliamentary opposition. Since neither the Prime Minister nor his opponents appear at present strong enough to win decisive control, the situation is deadlocked for the moment.

The rioting on the 15th and 16th in Shiraz, in the southwest, which threatened the lives of American Point IV personnel was apparently caused by Communist exploitation of demonstrations by rival factions.

Current Tehran cables reflect high tension and suggest that the situation is building up to a climax which could result in a breakdown of public order as antagonistic groups struggle for power.

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